

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICAE-00
SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 DOE-15 SOE-02 DOEE-00 OC-06
CCO-00 PER-01 OPR-02 OES-07 AID-05 PC-01 EB-08
COME-00 AGRE-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 A-01 SY-05 FDRE-00
/118 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3012

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 2672

LONDON FOR SEITZ

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, PGOV, GH

SUBJ: LAWYERS AND DOCTORS ON STRIKE, ENGINEERS MAY FOLLOW

REF: ACCRA 2598

1. SUMMARY: LAWYERS AND DOCTORS ARE STRIKING TO PROTEST GOG'S ALLEGED RIGGING OF MARCH 30 REFERENDUM. AS OF AFTERNOON APRIL 5 ACCRA IS CALM AND ELECTRICITY, WATER AND GASOLINE ARE ALL AVAILABLE. ENGINEERS MAY WALK OUT BY END OF WEEK. IF THEY DO, AT LEAST SCATTERED SHORTAGES OF UTILITIES AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS ARE LIKELY, PUTTING PRESSURE ON GOG AND RAISING POSSIBILITY OF CLASHES BETWEEN GOG SUPPORTERS AND DETRACTORS. HOWEVER, REFERENDUM ISSUE MAY BE FOUGHT OUT IN COURTS RATHER THAN THROUGH LONG STRIKES. END SUMMARY.

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2. LAWYERS WENT ON STRIKE APRIL 3. DOCTORS BEGAN MOVING OUT OF SOME HOSPITALS NEXT DAY AND ARE NOW ON STRIKE, TOO. SINCE NURSES WALKED OUT BEFORE MARCH 30 REFERENDUM ON UNION GOVERNMENT, QUALITY OF MEDICAL CARE FOR AVERAGE GHANAIAAN IS CERTAIN TO PLUMMET. HOWEVER, MILITARY AND POLICE HAVE THEIR OWN DOCTORS AND NURSES; THEY, TOGETHER

WITH ELITE (WHO KNOW DOCTORS SOCIALLY AND CAN OBTAIN TREATMENT AT THEIR HOMES), ARE NOT LIKELY TO SUFFER MUCH. LAWYERS' STRIKE PER SE WILL HAVE LIMITED IMPACT.

3. A RELIABLE SOURCE TELLS US THAT GHANA BAR ASSOCIATION PLANS TO HAVE WRIT SERVED ON ELECTORAL COMMISSION TO CHALLENGE LEGALITY OF REFERENDUM. IF GOG ALLOWS THIS PROCESS TO GO FORWARD, IT MAY BUY TIME AND ALLOW TEMPERS TO COOL. SINCE UNION GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS APPEAR CONVINCED

THEIR SIDE BEHAVED HONESTLY IN REFERENDUM AND THAT UNION GOVERNMENT WON FAIR AND SQUARE. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THEY

MIGHT WIN SUCH A LEGAL BATTLE. IN ANY CASE, LEGAL PROCESS HERE MOVES AT A GLACIAL PACE AND NO FINAL DECISION FROM COURTS WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR SOME CONSIDERABLE TIME.

4. AS OF MID-AFTERNOON APRIL 5, UTILITIES AND GASOLINE ARE AVAILABLE. WE HAVE HEARD RUMORS THAT ENGINEERS, WHO CONTROL SUPPLIES OF THESE VITAL COMMODITIES, MAY GO ON STRIKE BY END OF WEEK, PERHAPS ON APRIL 7. IF SO, SHORTAGES ARE LIKELY TO APPEAR, PUTTING FURTHER PRESSURE ON GOG, ALREADY SKITTISH BECAUSE ITS CLAIM OF A UNION GOVERNMENT VICTORY IN MARCH 30 REFERENDUM IS WIDELY RIDICULED, AND RAISING POSSIBILITY OF CLASHES BETWEEN GOG SUPPORTERS AND THEIR OPPONENTS. ACCRA REMAINS QUIET, AT LEAST ON CONFIDENTIAL

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THE SURFACT, BUT BEHIND-THE-SCENES MEETINGS ARE BEING HELD BY ACTIVISTS ON BOTH SIDES. OUR FEELING AT THIS POINT IS THAT PROFESSIONALS WILL PROBABLY LACK HIGH DEGREE OF ORGANIZATION, TENACITY AND PUBLIC SUPPORT NECESSARY TO OUST HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG. IF THEY ARE ABLE TO WIN ACTIVE BACKING AMONG OFFICERS OF ARMED FORCES OR TRADE UNIONS, THEIR PROSPECTS WILL BE ENHANCED. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE NOT LINED UP ANY VISIBLE OR SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT IN THESE ORGANIZATIONS FOR A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT.

5. IN RELATED DEVELOPMENTS, ON APRIL 4 GOG OUTLAWED ALL PUBLIC MEETINGS CALLED TO DISCUSS REFERENDUM OR ITS OUTCOME. ANNOUNCEMENT SAID THAT "ALL FORMS OF CELEBRATIONS OR MEETINGS BY BOTH THE SUPPORTERS AND OPPONENTS OF THE PROPOSAL FOR UNION GOVERNMENT ARE BANNED. THIS DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN AS A POSITIVE STEP BY THE GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE THAT NO UNPLEASANT INCIDENTS OCCUR..." THIS MOVE FOLLOWS APRIL 3 BANNING OF THREE ORGANIZATIONS OPPOSED TO UNION GOVERNMENT (REFTEL) AND IS PROBABLY DESIGNED TO FURTHER SILENCE MAIN OPPOSITION GROUP, PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE (PFMJ).

6. LOCAL PRESS APRIL 5 REPORTS THAT "ASSOCIATION OF GHANAIAAN CITIZENS IN BRITAIN, NORTHERN IRELAND, GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES" HAS APPEALED TO CITIZENS NOT TO COLLABORATE WITH FOREIGN AGENTS. ADDRESSING PRESS CONFERENCE IN ACCRA, ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT ALEX ASABRE SAID THAT "THOSE OF US WHO ARE RESIDENT ABROAD HAVE REALIZED THAT THE WHITE MAN, NO MATTER WHAT, WILL NEVER INSULT HIS HEAD OF STATE AND DESTROY HIS OWN MOTHERLAND." HE CALLED ON GHANAIAANS TO DO LIKEWISE AND REFRAIN FROM SUBVERSIVE ACTS. WE TAKE REFERENCE TO "FOREIGN AGENTS" TO MEAN BBC, WHICH HAS BEEN CARRYING STORIES STRONGLY HINTING THAT REFERENDUM WAS RIGGED BY GOG. REFERENCE TO US IS ALSO POSSIBLE, SINCE LOCAL GRAPEVINE HAD IT THAT WHEN ELECTORAL

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COMMISSIONER ABBAN WENT INTO HIDING, HE WAS SECRETED IN AMERICAN EMBASSY. (NEEDLESS TO SAY, THIS IS NOT RPT NOT TRUE.)

7. COMMENT: TRYING TO LOOK AT THE FOREST RATHER THAN ONLY THE TREES HERE, WE SUSPECT THAT WHILE COORDINATED STRIKES BY PROFESSIONALS COULD PARALYZE MODERN SECTOR OF ECONOMY (INCLUDING VALCO, IF ELECTRICITY TO ALUMINIUM SMELTER GOES OFF FOR MORE THAN THREE HOURS), WE VERY MUCH DOUBT ACHEAMPONG AND RULING SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL WILL STEP DOWN AS PROFESSIONALS DEMAND. A COUP IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE IN THIS COUNTRY BUT BARRING THIS EVENTUALITY, WE THINK ODDS ARE GOOD STRIKES WILL PETER OUT AND BOTH SIDES WILL SEEK PEACEFUL WAYS TO RESOLVE DIFFERENCES. WHILE GOG HAS BANNED PMFJ, IT MIGHT WELL INCLUDE LEADERS IN CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION WHICH IS SCHEDULED TO BE SET UP AN

END OF THIS MONTH. SMITH

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